THE DAY IS FINALLY HERE!

Act 4
Rule

THE BACKBONE OF THE AUTOMATA, AND THEIR SYMBOL...

WE HAVE FINALLY CAUGHT UP WITH IT!
NOW ...

HUNTED DOWN THE DOLLS SCATTERED ACROSS THE WORLD.
TRUSTING THAT THIS DAY WOULD COME, WE SHIROGANE ...

NORTH AFRICA:
CENTER OF THE SAHARA DESERT

THE MIDNIGHT CIRCUS!!

YEAH... IN AMERICA, DIDN'T IT TURN OUT THAT HE WAS STRONGER THAN THAT SHIROGANE-O, GEORGE?
REALLY ?!
AND HE ALSO DEFEATED FLAVIO AND AP CHAR WITH HIS BARE HANDS, EVEN THOUGH HE'S NOT A SHIROGANE-O.
AMA-ZING ...

NO, ACTUALLY, I THINK THE ONE WHO HELPED FIND THE DOG WAS THAT NEWCOMER SHIROGANE.
YEAH, I HEARD THAT TOO. THE ASIAN GUY, RIGHT ?

IF I'M NOT MISTAKEN ... IT WAS ...
SO WHAT'S HIS NAME?

MADAME LUCILLE ?!
IT SEEMS MADAME LUCILLE WAS THE ONE WHO FOUND IT.
THE PLACE WE COULDN'T TRACK DOWN FOR ALL THESE DECADES...
ANYWAY... IT'S AMAZING SOMEONE FIGURED OUT IT WAS HERE.

OF COURSE IT WOULD BE MADAME LUCILLE WHO MANAGED TO PULL OFF SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
DUNNO... BUT NATURALLY OUR SENSE OF SMELL COULD NEVER MEASURE UP TO A DOG'S.
WHAT KIND OF DOG...?
YEAH, I HEARD SHE FOUND THIS DOG SHIROGANE IN CHINA THAT TRACKED THEM DOWN WITH ITS SENSE OF SMELL.

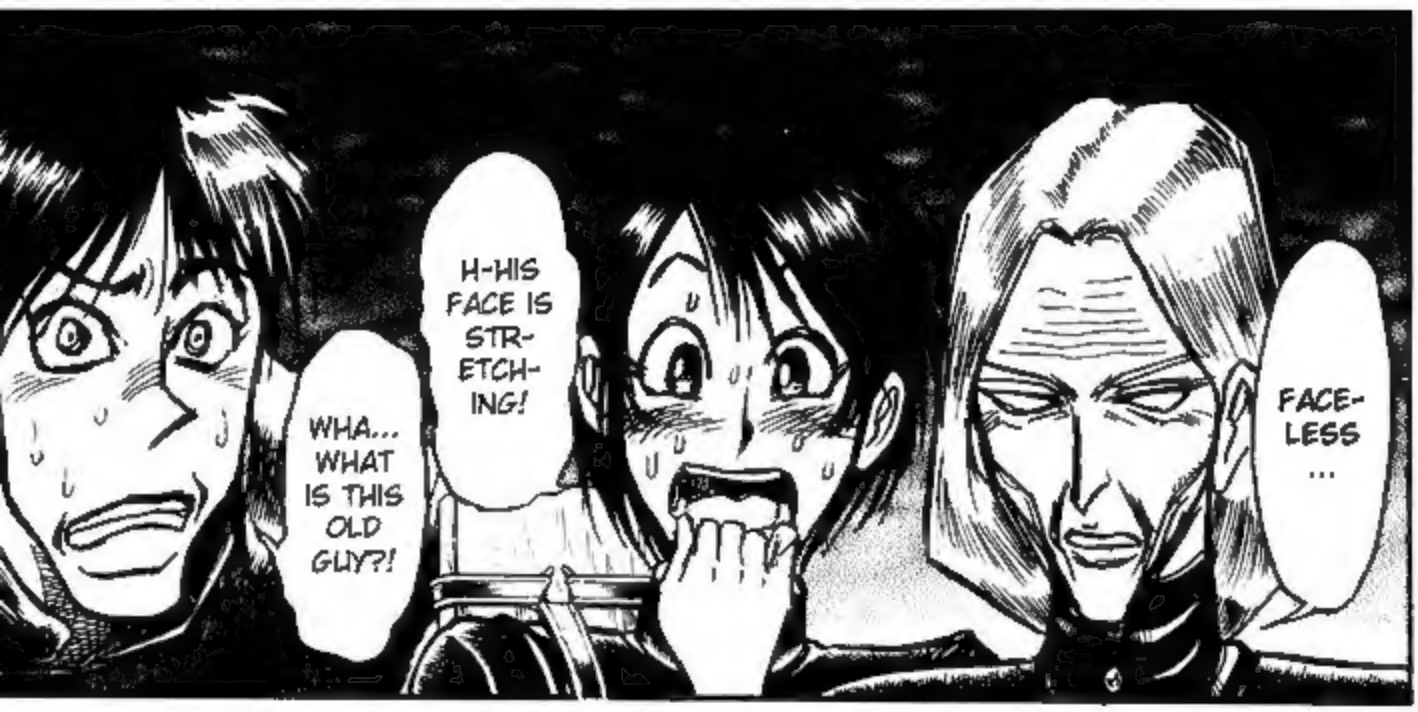
ヒョオオオオ
NA-RU-MI ...
KA-TOU NA-RU-MI!
IS ANY-ONE HOME ?!
ABUH ?!

JUST... JUST A FEW MINUTES AGO THERE WAS NO ONE HERE...
A-ARE THERE REALLY THIS MANY SHIRO-GANE?
AND HERE WE HAVE A MAN GIVING AN IDIOTIC REPLY AND A WOMAN TALKING NONSENSE.
DID YOU THINK WE COULD DESTROY DOLLS SCATTERED ALL OVER THE WORLD WITH ONLY A HUNDRED OR A THOUSAND PEOPLE?

THE SHIROGANE NUMBER THIRTY THOUSAND... AND NEARLY ALL OF THEM ARE GATHERED HERE.
ズカ
TH-THIR...
Y'MEAN THERE'S GONNA BE THIRTY THOUSAND WRINKLED OLD IMMORTALS JUST LIKE Y—
YOU'RE A SHIROGANE TOO, YOU KNOW.
Mind your own business
Hee hee!
BUT IF YOU COMPARE IT TO THE NUMBER OF AUTOMATA, IT'S REALLY QUITE A SMALL AMOUNT.
OH, YOU'RE, UH, ONE OF THE LEADERS ...
5
FATIMA. I'M A SHIROGANE WHO BELONGS TO THE PEOPLE OF THE DESERT.
SINCE THE SAHARA IS WITHIN MY JURISDICTION, I'LL BE ACTING AS A SPECIAL ADVISORY STAFF OFFICER.
I LOOK FORWARD TO WORKING WITH YOU, NARUMI AND MING-XIA.
OK
YOU KNOW OUR NAMES?
OF COURSE. AFTER ALL, YOU'RE FAMOUS AMONG THE SHIROGANE, NARUMI.

You so were! You looked like a total leech!
What?! I was not!
HEY, MING-HAI, WHAT'S WITH THAT PERVY FACE? FEELING A LITTLE FULL OF OURSELF, ARE WE?
O-OH, REALLY ...?
I SEE.
NOW, MADAME LUCILLE, THERE WILL BE SEVERAL LEADERS ...
HEY THERE, 'SCUSE US.

SORRY WE'RE LATE!
THE SHIRO-GANE-O FROM AMERICA HAVE ARRIVED!

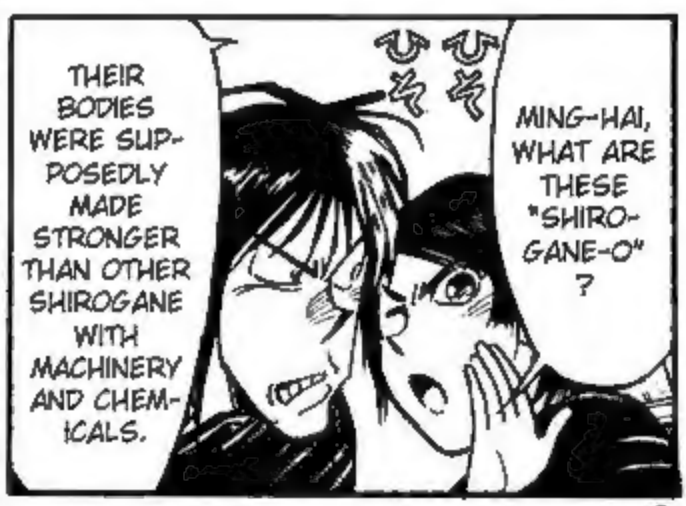

FACE-LESS ...
H-HIS FACE IS STR-ETCH-ING!
WHA... WHAT IS THIS OLD GUY?!

COMMANDER FACELESS IS THE CREATOR OF THE SHIROGANE-O, AND THE COORDINATING OFFICER FOR GROUP WARFARE.
HE'S VERY FOND OF PLAYING AROUND LIKE THIS.

SO EVERY-ONE IS HERE, THEN.
THAAAT'S RIGHT, LUCILLE!
LOOK, I'VE FOUND A WAY TO MAKE MY FACE STRETCH SIDEWAYS TOO.

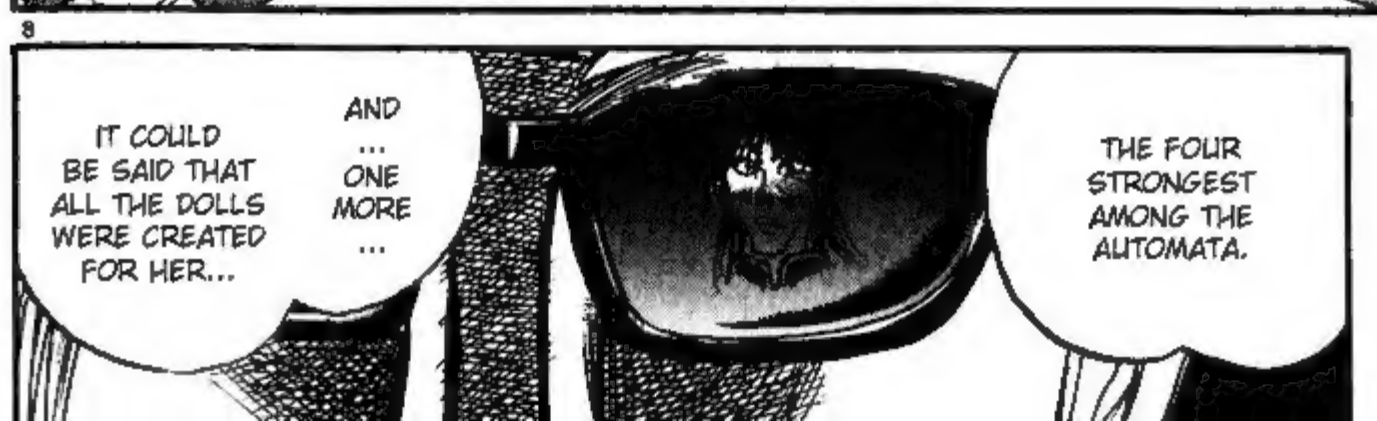
GWAAH!
HYA HYA HYA! DID I GET YOU? SURPRISED, WEREN'T YOU?

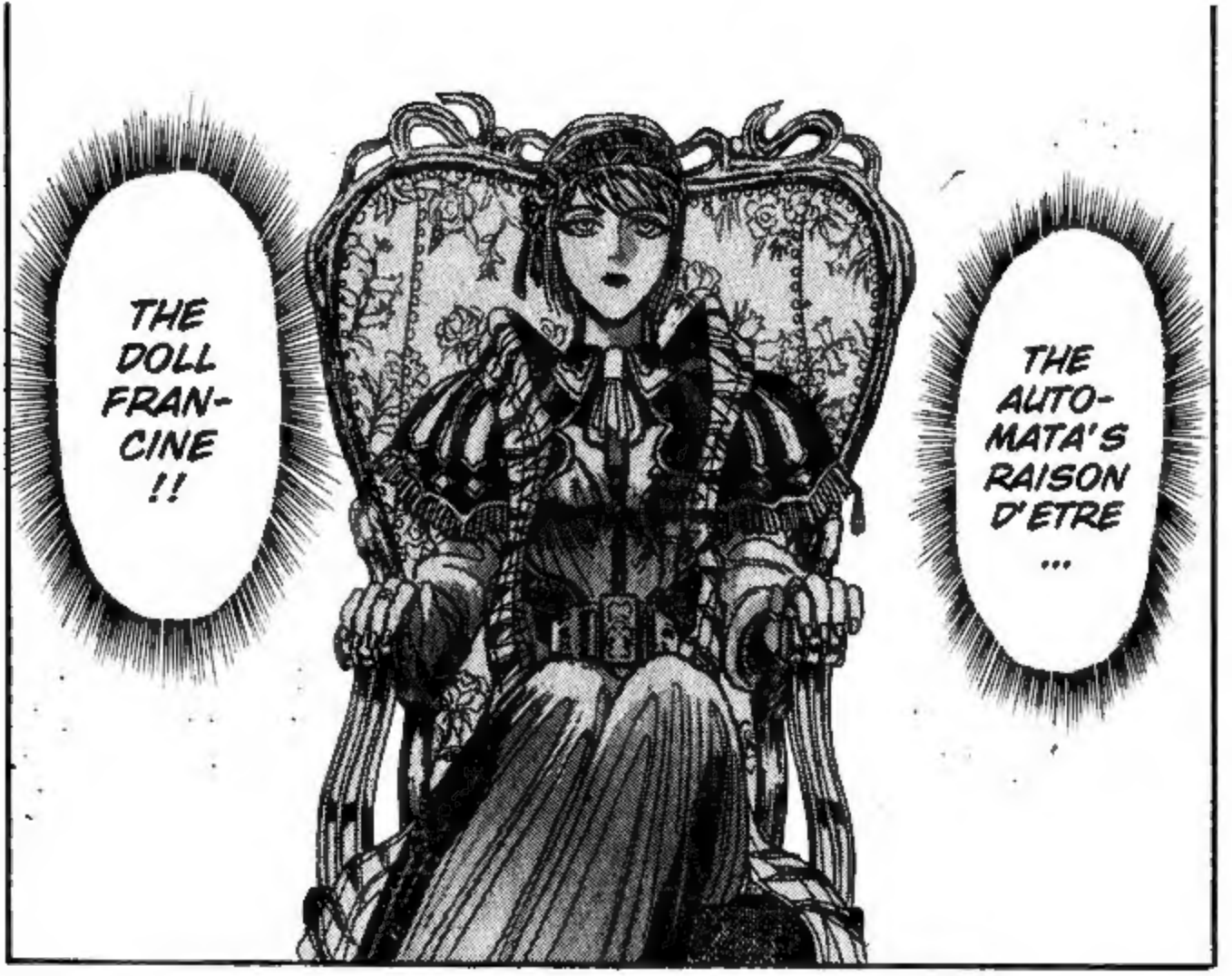
I BET THIS ONE IS TOO!


MING-HAI, WHAT ARE THESE "SHIRO-GANE-O" ?
THEIR BODIES WERE SUP-POSEDLY MADE STRONGER THAN OTHER SHIROGANE WITH MACHINERY AND CHEM-ICALS.

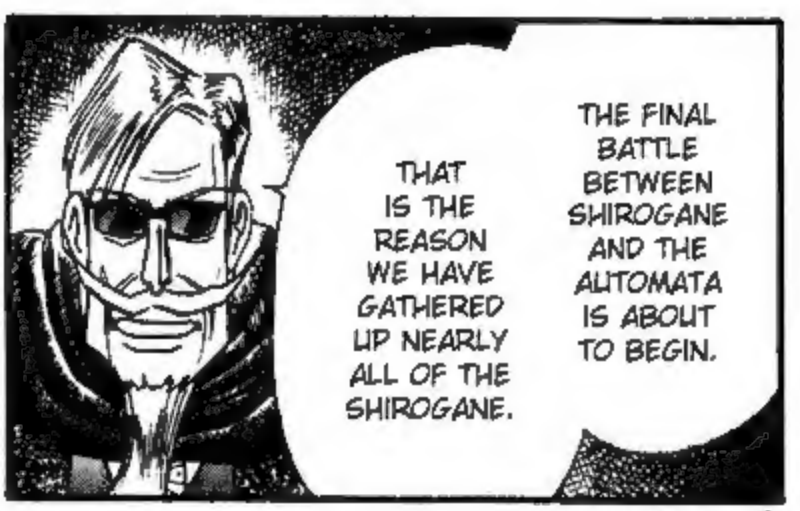
I'VE ONLY MET ONE OF THEM, BUT HE WAS A REAL ASSHOLE.

I AM FACELESS. I'M EXPECTING GREAT THINGS FROM YOU.
YOU MUST BE NARUMI. I'VE HEARD ABOUT YOU FROM GEORGE AND LUCILLE. YOU'RE QUITE STRONG, AREN'T YOU?
WHAT IS IT, ALREADY ?
OVER THERE IS WHAT WE'VE BEEN CHASING AFTER.
ANY-WAY...
ARLECCHINO ...
COLUMBINE ...
DOTTORE ...
PANTALONE ...
LES QUATRE PIONNIERS.


IT COULD BE SAID THAT ALL THE DOLLS WERE CREATED FOR HER...
AND ... ONE MORE ...
THE FOUR STRONGEST AMONG THE AUTOMATA.


THE DOLL FRAN-CINE !!
THE AUTO-MATA'S RAISON D'ETRE ...

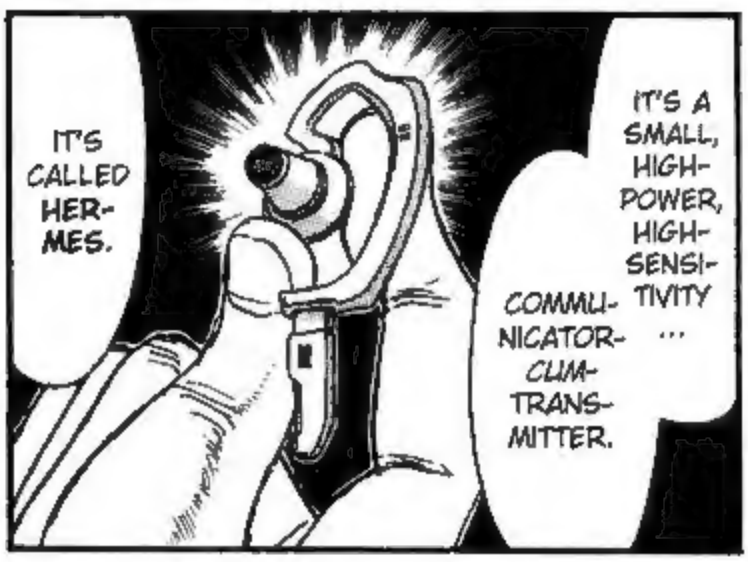
THE SNAKE WILL DIE ...
IF YOU CRUSH ITS HEAD ...


THAT IS THE REASON WE HAVE GATHERED UP NEARLY ALL OF THE SHIROGANE.
THE FINAL BATTLE BETWEEN SHIROGANE AND THE AUTOMATA IS ABOUT TO BEGIN.

AS LONG AS WE DESTROY FRANCINE, ANNHILIATING THE REST OF THE AUTOMATA WILL BE AN EASY TASK!
THAT'S RIGHT.

.....
Yo! You must be young Ming-Xia. Nice to meet you. I'll be counting on you.
Y-YEAH ...
CAN'T TELL IF I SHOULD TAKE THE OLD GUY SERIOUSLY OR NOT ...
Ash! Lucille, get him off me!
And you must be the Shirogane pooch! So you were out there somewhere? Good boy! Here's some beef jerky.

VERY WELL.
WE'RE AWAITING YOUR ORDERS, MADAME LUCILLE.
HMPH. I SEE THAT MAN'S AS CRAFTY AS EVER.
DON'T LET YOUR GUARD DOWN AROUND HIM, OR HE'LL TURN YOU INTO ONE OF HIS SHIRO-GANE-O.


IT'S CALLED HER-MES.
IT'S A SMALL, HIGH-POWER, HIGH-SENSI-TIVITY ... COMMU-NICATOR-CUM-TRANS-MITTER.

WHAT IS IT?
YOU TWO, PUT THESE IN YOUR EARS.

WOW, WHAT A HANDY LITTLE GADGET!
SEE?
THIS IS LUCILLE ADDRESSING THE SHIROGANE.
AND TO SPEAK TO EVERYONE ...
FOR PRIVATE CALLS, JUST SAY THE PERSON'S NAME BEFORE-HAND.

UNTIL MIDNIGHT TOMORROW, WHATEVER IT TAKES...

I WILL NOW ANNOUNCE WHAT YOUR MISSION IS TO BE...

THAT IS ALL!
THE MIDNIGHT CIRCUS MUST BE KEPT HERE.

HMPH.
MADAME LUCILLE AND THE OTHERS MUST HAVE A PLAN.

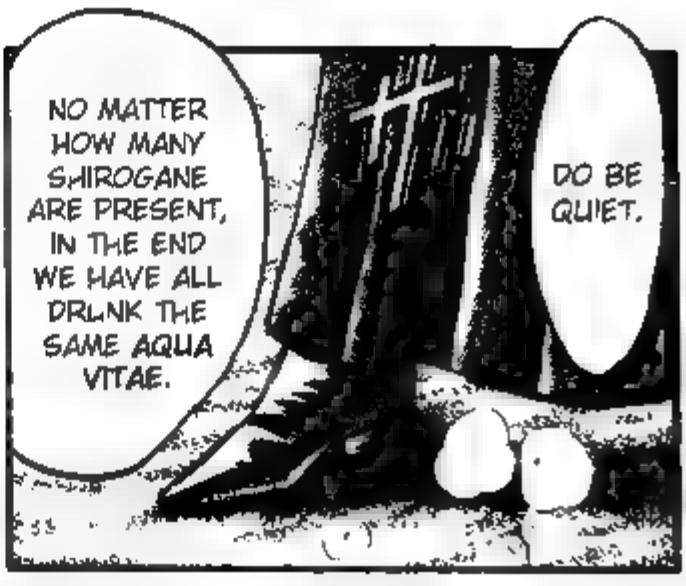
KEEP THEM FROM MOVING 'TIL MIDNIGHT TOMORROW, HUH...

12

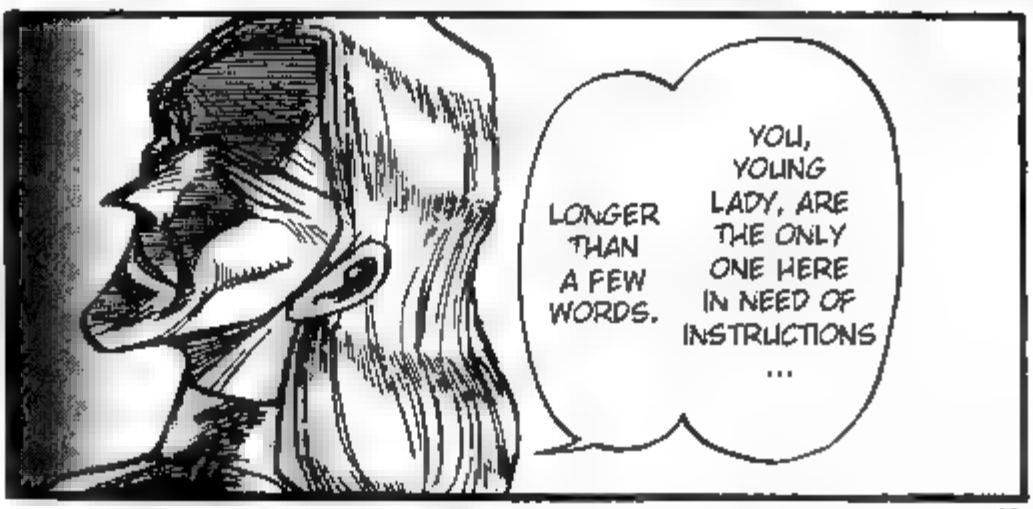
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?! KEEP THEM HERE?! HOW ARE WE GONNA DO THAT, LUCILLE?!
THOSE ARE ALL THE ORDERS YOU'RE GIVING?! THAT'S IT?! WHAT THE HELL ARE WE SUPPOSED TO DO WITH THAT?!

WE'LL UNDER-STAND BEFORE LONG ...

TO PUT IT MORE CLEARLY, WE ALL POSSESS THE SAME WILL AND KNOWLEDGE AS THE MAN CALLED BAI YIN ...
WE COULD BE CONSIDERED THE SAME PERSON.


NO MATTER HOW MANY SHIROGANE ARE PRESENT, IN THE END WE HAVE ALL DRUNK THE SAME AQUA VITAE.
DO BE QUIET.

I don't get it either!
OH... UM, SORRY.


YOU, YOUNG LADY, ARE THE ONLY ONE HERE IN NEED OF INSTRUCTIONS ...
LONGER THAN A FEW WORDS.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO MADAME ...
YOU INSO-LENT MAN?

OKAY, BUT STILL, LUCILLE, JUST HOW ARE WE GONNA KEEP THOSE DOLLS HERE ?!
ARE YOU EXPECTING US TO JUST WALK UP AND SAY, "HEY, PLEASE DON'T GO ANYWHERE! THANKS!"

I AM THE GENERAL LEADER OF THE SHIROGANE-O, US DIVISION... NA.A STEEL.
WE SHIROGANE ARE ALWAYS RESPECTFUL TOWARDS OUR SUPERIORS.
WH-WHAT ARE YOU DOING ?!
NOW, NOW. NARUMI, WHAT WE SHOULD BE DOING ...
IS PLANNING OUT THE WAY WE'RE GOING TO KEEP THEM HERE.
Even though she hits me sometimes
WHAT THE HELL?! OF COURSE I WASN'T GONNA HIT HER OR ANYTHING LIKE THAT!
WEAKNESS?
BUT THEY HAVE ONE INESCAPABLE WEAKNESS.
THE AUTOMATA ARE VERY PRECISE, AND VERY CALCULATING ...
HUH ?
ALL OF THE AUTOMATA, INCLUDING LES QUATRE PIONNIERS, HAVE CLOWN-LIKE CHARACTERISTICS.
IT APPEARS THEY WERE BUILT FOR THE PURPOSE OF MAKING THE DOLL FRANCINE LAUGH.
IT IS THE FACT THAT THEY WERE ORIGINALLY CLOWNS...

WHAT THEY LIKE THE MOST ...?
WHAT DO YOU THINK THOSE CLOWNS LIKE THE MOST?
I WILL GO NOW, COMMANDER.
LET THE GAME ... BEGIN.
AH ...
WOULD YOU LIKE TO PLAY A GAME?
AUTOMATA ...

HOW ABOUT IT? WHY DON'T WE SETTLE MATTERS ONCE AND FOR ALL BY PLAYING A GAME?
YOUR OLD ENEMIES, THE SHIROGANE, HAVE GATHERED HERE TODAY TO THE LAST MAN.

INCAPABLE OF TURNING DOWN THE OFFER OF A GAME.
THE AUTOMATA WERE BUILT TO BE...
THAT'S RIGHT, NARUMI. A GAME.
A GAME?
IN A BATTLE BETWEEN OUR REPRESENTATIVES, WHICHEVER SIDE HAS THE MOST SURVIVORS WILL BE CONSIDERED THE WINNER.
LET US COMPARE THE POWER OF THE DOLLS AND THE SHIROGANE.
HOW ABOUT IT? WE CAN BE EACH OTHER'S AUDIENCE.
YOU HAVE NO NEED TO EAT OR SLEEP, AND WE SHIROGANE CAN GO WITHOUT DOING SO FOR TWO WEEKS. WE CAN FIGHT WITHOUT ANY INTERRUPTIONS.
HOW ABOUT IT? WOULDN'T THAT BE FUN?

ス…
WELL, WAIT AND SEE.
ARE THEY REALLY GONNA GO FOR THIS?

WE HAVE NO WEA-PONS.
WE ARE COMING IN.
LET ME TELL YOU NOW THAT WE ARE COMING ONLY TO PROPOSE THE RULES OF THE GAME.

SEE ...?

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DEAR SHIRO-GANE FRIENDS.
THE OFFER IS ACCEP-TED...

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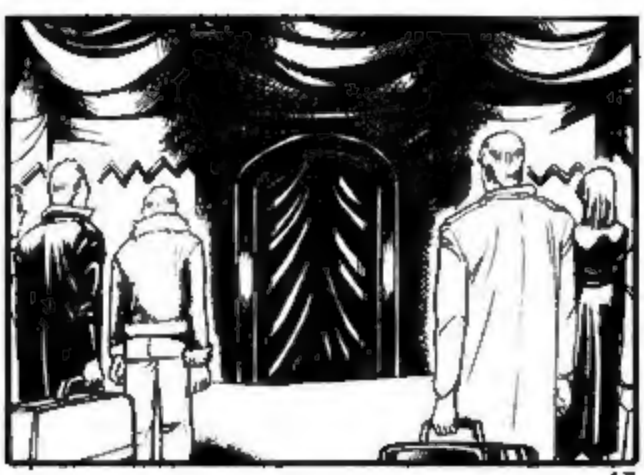

THE SHIRO-GANE-O HAVE WEAPONS *INSIDE* THEIR BODIES.
WELL, THEY SAID THEY HAD NO WEAPONS, BUT THAT'S BECAUSE ...
……

WHA ...
HOW-EVER, THE AUTO-MATA ...
WISH TO REQUEST A CHANGE OF RULES.
7
YOU WILL SEND JUST TWENTY OF YOUR REPRE-SENTATIVES INTO OUR TENT.
WE WILL NOT HOLD OUR SHOW ON THE SHIROGANE'S STAGE.
ﾌｧｯ!!
AA AA AA AH !!

YOU COULD CALL IT A RULE OF THE CIRCUS, COULDN'T YOU?
AFTER ALL, THIS SORT OF GAME SIMPLY MUST BE PLAYED IN THE RING ...

translation by funnuraba.tumblr.com

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Thanks to Judash137 on the mangafox forums for removing the Japanese text, and to the anonymous person who tipped me off to that!

Any group with more experience or skill is welcome to take over at any time or to redo chapters I have already done if they are below the quality that this series deserves.